

**Summary of the Alligator Advisory Council Meeting
May 31, 2011
Louisiana Room
Baton Rouge, Louisiana**

Council Present

Dwight Savoie
Nathan Wall
Kevin Sagrera
Chad Courville
Tim Allen
Mike Bengé
Ronald Guy

Council Absent

Dan Davis
Gerald Savoie

LDWF Presence

Noel Kinler
Tanya Sturman
Buddy Baker
Bob Love
Edmond Mouton
Jill Jordan
Ruth Elsey

Others

Don Ashley
Pam Ashley
Javier Nevarez
Frank Ellender
Curtis Cruse
Sam Smith
Marilyn Ensminger
Allan Ensminger
Ted Joanen
Archie Domangue
Gerald Domangue
Marco Dermody
Mark Shirley
Charlie Pettefer
Tab Pitre
John Lindsey
Kenneth Dupont

Kevin motioned to approve the minutes from the February 23rd meeting. Nathan seconded. Motion carried unanimously.

Mike motioned to amend the agenda and to move item number 6 up to the number 4 position. Ronald seconded. Motion carried unanimously.

Noel thanked Johnny Price for his service on the Council and presented him with a plaque.

Noel introduced Dwight Savoie to the Council.

Washington D.C. RFP- Update and Consideration

Noel reported that the Department had put out an RFP in February. They received four proposals. He reviewed the proposers' experience and cost. He reviewed the final scores for each proposal. The review committee rated Glenn Delaney's proposal the highest, with the most experience and a good price. Noel explained that a three year contract would be awarded with a vote by both the Alligator Advisory Council and the Fur Advisory Council.

Mike motioned to contract with Glenn Delaney. Dwight seconded. Motion carried unanimously.

Washington D.C. Trip

Noel reported on a trip to D.C. and meetings with congressional delegations and their staff. Glenn Delaney had made appointments with each delegation member. Department staff met with the delegations regarding earmark funding for alligator research. They also talked about nutria and feral swine control. Congressman Fleming is on the natural resource committee. Congressman Alexander is on the appropriations committee. Buddy Baker reported that the congressmen and their staff are well educated on the alligator and trapping industries. He said that it is important to maintain contact with them. They left briefing books with each office regarding wildlife issues in Louisiana. They also met with the US Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) about CITES issues and educational displays.

Don Ashley reported that this was one of the better meetings that they've had with the USFWS. A major issue has been delays with exports. A pre-approval system would expedite exports. Don Ashley said that the export process gets hung up on the attachment of the tag list. Those that are approved for this expedited system could have permits within 24 hours. The application fee will be \$200, but once an exporter is in the system the permits will only cost \$5. If we can make this system work for farmers and dealers, it could also be used for tanneries shipping out color swatches.

Another issue has been re-tagging. One type of tanning finish requires the tag to be removed before the skin goes into the drum. U.S. tanneries need a way to retag these skins for export. They are working on special rules that would allow this to happen.

Tim asked if this had to be done with a rule change or if it is a policy change. Don said that the exporting issue would not take a rule change at this point. Chad asked why USFWS is now more receptive to new ideas. Don thinks that there is international pressure. Some European countries are moving away from paper permitting altogether and going digital. Don also said that 99.9+% of alligator trade is legal. Chad asked if the new staff would be around a while. Don thinks that this staff will be around and will continue to work well with us.

They are also making progress with airport messages. USFWS staff agrees that the messages in the displays are problematic. USFWS will follow up with enforcement about the content of the displays.

Chad asked if the Council should send a letter. Noel suggested that we wait for USFW to report back to us and then discuss it. Tim suggested reviewing this at the next meeting. *Chad asked that this go on the agenda for the next meeting.*

Don gave an update on the latest animal rights videos. He said that Tiffany's removed exotic skin products. There is a new video scheduled for release, and BBC may be involved with this video. If BBC is involved the distribution will be much larger. Switzerland is requesting assistance with refuting these videos. Kevin questioned if it is productive to draw attention to ourselves by publically justifying our position. He said that we have data and research in place that backs up our position. Noel agreed that it is a difficult a decision to determine how proactive we should be. Kevin agreed that we should give the manufacturers the information they need to justify their business, but that they should take up the education in Switzerland. Chad asked who else is

worried about this and how are they reacting. Noel thought that everyone in the industry is worried, but he can't say how they are reacting.

The television show, Swamp People, adds to public concern. *Chad asked that this go on the agenda for the next meeting.*

Noel talked about the tagging issue of putting the tag number in every skull that is exported. Changing this would require a rule change. USFWS is working on rule changes now, and Noel intends to draft a response requesting that this become a part of the rule change. Noel said that he will bring the Council up to date when this rule change proposal is available.

Tim motioned to approve a letter by the Council addressing USFWS rule change proposals. Kevin seconded. Motion carried unanimously.

Freedom of Information Act- Noel Kinler

There is a Louisiana Freedom of Information Act requiring that information related to the alligator industry is public information and therefore, is available to the public upon request. Farmers and tanners feel that some information, for example shipping records, could be detrimental to their business. Some farmers have created businesses to handle shipping to disguise where skins are shipped. The Department has been discussing with the legal department if the Freedom of Information Act can be amended to keep some information proprietary. The biggest request for information has been for shipping records, but other requests include alligator inventory and landowner permits, etc. Amending this Act would require legislative action.

Nathan said that he has no issue with reporting all data to LDWF and having it compiled in an industry report. He does not want the information, such as where he sells each skin, made public. He would like the Council to discuss the specifics regarding what exceptions we would request.

Chad asked about the time frame. Noel said that we would look at legislation for 2012. Chad suggested that a group talk this out and educate the Council about this issue. *Chad asked that this go on the agenda for the next meeting.* Tim suggested that the Farmers and Ranchers organization bring their requests to the Council. Noel said that the Department can work with the Farmers and Ranchers on this so that there is some agreement on the language.

Ted Joanen said the USFWS report is more detailed than the state report. Ted asked how changing state regulation would affect that data base. Noel said that it would not affect it. Someone could go to the federal government and request the same information.

Member Nominations- Noel Kinler

Noel said that three members have terms expiring. Since these members have not served a full term, current members are eligible for another term. Chad Courville has been reappointed. The Department is still awaiting letters regarding the positions currently held by Kevin Sagrera and Dwight Savoie. Chad asked that the Farmer's Association and the Trapper's Association have their letters in by June 15.

Alligator Program Update- Noel Kinler

Noel reported on flood and drought conditions.

He also talked about income. The Department has taken in about \$870,000. This is a little less than expected. There are still some skins to be shipped. We should know real expenditures by the next Council meeting. The budget for the 2012 fiscal year is in the legislative system now. In August we will begin discussing the budget request for 2013. Nathan asked about the state government pulling a percentage of dedicated funds. Noel thought that the State didn't meet the criteria for this year, but it may meet the criteria to pull funds in 2012. Chad asked that the Department keep in touch with the Council about this.

Noel said that the Department is mailing out applications for the wild season and will be flying surveys in June and July.

Noel said that rule change requests were made to the Commission, and they are now out for public comment.

A company in Italy has donated 113 skins for the LSU Human Ecology project. We now have enough skins. Buddy attended a fashion show hosted by LSU on behalf of the Council. Buddy said that the run-way show was very eclectic and creative. The green message was present. There was also the message that lower grade skins can make attractive clothing. There will also be a national program for alligator products. Chad asked if they received a Board of Regent's grant. Noel said that this grant was not awarded to Dr. McRoberts.

Javier gave an update on various aspects of his research and work. The initial research will focus on evaluation of current euthanasia techniques. Following the euthanasia research, he will conduct testing for stunning an alligator in order to examine it for skin quality. They will have some data on the first phase by the end of the summer. At this point they will also meet with some veterinarians from CSG. They are also working on vaccines for West Nile virus.

Other Business

Congress Boustany introduced bills to fund a pilot feral swine program and to continue the nutria control program. Senator Landrieu introduced mirror bills in the Senate. We have drafted support letters for these bills.

Tim motioned to sign the draft letters. Ronald seconded. Motion carried unanimously.

Nathan gave an update on the alligator research facility. The finances have been secured and they are ready to break ground.

Noel asked that the Council consider a meeting in mid-July.

Kevin motioned to adjourn. Mike seconded. Motion carried unanimously.